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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major theme of today's editorials was
Thursday's parliamentary election.

Analysis: While the majority of the day's editorials highlighted the preliminary results of Thursday's parliamentary election, independent Al-Mashriq focused on the recent increase in fuel prices—a subject of much debate in the Iraqi media. Independent As-Sabah Al-Jadeed discussed the importance of the election as a significant step in the political process. Al-Bayyan, affiliated with Ad-Dawa party, published a front-page editorial entitled "The UIA and Renewable Confidence," which articulated the accomplishments of Al-Ja'fari's government. The Sunni-affiliated Al-Basaer used its editorial page to reveal skepticism about preliminary election results. END SUMMARY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [1A. "Review It before It Becomes a Book" \(Az-Zaman, 12/21\)](#)
- [1B. "I Challenge the Minister of Oil to Resign" \(Al-Mashriq, 12/21\)](#)
- [1C. "Heated Exchange of Accusations" \(As-Sabah, 12/21\)](#)
- [1D. "After Elections" \(Al-Ittihad, 12/21\)](#)
- [1E. "What Is after the Election?" \(Al-Fourat, 12/21\)](#)
- [1F. "The Honesty of the Rigging Commission" \(Al-Basaer, 12/21\)](#)
- [1G. "The Principle" \(Al-Adala, 12/21\)](#)

SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A. "Review It before It Becomes a Book"](#)
(Az-Zaman, independent, published a back-page editorial by Fateh Abdul Salam about the violations that occurred throughout the electoral process. The editorial reads in part)

"The election has become a base for the democratic process in Iraq. This election will rearrange Iraq's entire political experiment. There were many violations during the election and these infringements must not be ignored. In some polling centers, thousands of voters lined up waiting to cast their votes, but they found that there was a lack of ballots in the polling centers. The Independent Electoral Commission (IECI) avoids answering any question about election violations. In the previous elections as well as this election, Iraqis were eager to find answers to their questions concerning violations. Unfortunately, they do not have answers thus far. The next parliament must give the final word on this election. We must not turn the pages of mistakes day by day because these mistakes will become a book of mistakes in the new era."

[1B. "I Challenge the Minister of Oil to Resign"](#)
(Al-Mashriq, independent, published a front-page editorial by Hamid Abdullah about increasing fuel prices in Iraq. The editorial reads in part)

"Iraqi people do not know why the government increased the price of fuel. Some of them say that the World Bank will assist Iraq only if fuel prices are increased in Iraq's local markets. We did not hear any justifiable reason from the government concerning this issue. Why did the government apply this decision after the election? Fuel prices increased just as the prices of other goods increased. The Minister of Oil has protested and condemned this decision and he threatened to submit his resignation. However, we all know that he will never resign, even if fuel prices increase fifty times. We just want to know: is Iraq a country that has oil wealth, or do we import oil from Darfur?"

[1C. "Heated Exchange of Accusations"](#)
(As-Sabah, independent, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Muhammad Abdul Jabbar about the recent exchange of accusations among politicians following the elections. The editorial reads in part)

"Yesterday was a heated day. It seemed that the rules of the electoral game would break after the election. There are political groups that are dissatisfied with the results of

the election. These groups believe that the election was seriously rigged. After the election, some started to threaten to use force. I think this is a dangerous issue in the democratic process; if the country were to reach this stage, it would be a major crisis. Therefore, the political scene in Iraq needs soothing and cooling. The solution to our problems can be achieved only by peaceful dialogue."

D. "After Elections"

(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, led by Talabani, published a front-page unattributed editorial about the period following the election and the Kurds' insistence on assuming one of the important positions in the next government. The editorial reads in part)
"The Kurdish political leadership insists on assuming the position of president or prime minister. Jalal Talabani is the most probable candidate for [one of these] positions because of his charismatic personality. The Kurdish leadership believes that it is better for the country at the current stage to reelect Talabani as president for the forthcoming period. However, the next parliament must review the responsibilities of the president because we need a president with strong authority to lead the country in the coming period."

E. "What Is after the Election?"

(Al-Fourat, independent, published a second-page editorial by Majed Fadhel Az-Zaboon about the elections, violations, and protests against the preliminary results that were announced by the IECI. The editorial reads in part)

"Following the election, protests began to appear, which focused on the preliminary results that were announced by the IECI. We do not know why the IECI announced these preliminary results while many ballot boxes have yet to be counted. I think this procedure forces us to be skeptical of the entire process. We know for sure that vote counting must be done after all ballot boxes arrive in the main counting center. Furthermore, the IECI must seriously and carefully study all complaints. The political parties that complained about the election must be patient; they must not aggravate the current situation. The current period forces us to step away from exchanges of accusations so that we can achieve national consensus in the parliament. This balanced parliament will comprise all Iraqi spectra. It will be able to form a government that can schedule the withdrawal of occupation forces and start rebuilding the country."

F. "The Honesty of the Rigging Commission"

(Al-Basaer, affiliated with the [Sunni] Muslim Scholars' Association, led by Harith Al-Dhari, published a front-page unattributed editorial that describes the IECI as dishonest and biased. The editorial reads in part)

"We were not surprised to hear the disgraceful, rigged results that were announced by the IECI. We know for sure that the commission is dishonest and takes its orders from the occupation authorities, who still control Iraq. It is in the interest of the occupation to have crises and divisions in Iraq in order to disunite the country. In fact, the matter is larger than the election results alone. These alleged results aim to establish pillars of the American project in Iraq and the entire region. In the end, Iraqis are the only losers from this chaos. The main problem in Iraq is the presence of the occupation. All disagreement and hatred would end with the termination of the occupation."

G. "The Principle"

(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI, led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, published a third-page editorial by Ali Khalif about the establishment of the next government. The editorial reads in part)

"The forthcoming government will be established according to the principle of national harmony. All over the world, the winner of the election forms the government. This principle can be applied to the current Iraqi elections, but it is very important to make all Iraqi spectra participate in the political process. For this reason, the UIA will not marginalize any Iraqi group; it has always insisted on working according to the principle of harmony. The coming period represents a stage for reconstruction and rebuilding, ending terrorism and looking forward to a free, democratic future. The political future in Iraq is destined to include ballot boxes, plurality, and respect for others' opinions. If there are disagreements, these disagreements must be solved within the parliament."

KHALILZAD